

THE ADMISSION OF ISRAEL TO
THE "WEOG" GROUP AT THE
UNITED NATIONS IS A CRITICAL
STEP FORWARD

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2000

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago the leaders of Western Europe took an immensely important step by inviting the State of Israel to join the "Western Europe and Other Group" (WEOG) at the United Nations. Membership in a regional grouping is significant at the United Nations because seats on the UN Security Council and other similar rotating positions are made through regional caucuses.

Israel has been a member of the United Nations since 1949—the year after the State of Israel was officially proclaimed—but during that half century, until it was invited to join the WEOG group last week, it was never a member of a regional group. As a result, Israel is the only country in the UN never to hold one of the rotating Security Council seats.

Mr. Speaker, this welcome decision is one that many of our colleagues in the Congress have fought to achieve through letters, resolutions and similar actions. Several months ago, at my suggestion, the ambassadors in Washington of the countries who are members of the WEOG group were invited to a meeting with members of the Committee on International Relations, where we pressed for the inclusion of Israel in that regional grouping. This important meeting made clear to our friends in Western Europe the importance that we in the Congress have given to this issue, and I think it was essential in helping to overcome the ill-founded resistance to Israel's participation in WEOG.

As I said to that large group of ambassadors attending the meeting, geographical proximity is not a consideration since WEOG includes, Turkey, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, in addition to the countries of Western Europe. Israel's strong links with Europe and North America as well as its advanced economy make its interests and policies very consistent with those of the other participants in the WEOG. Israel's exclusion from the Asia Group and the Middle East subgroup is a case of blatant discrimination and a deliberate effort to de-legitimize the State of Israel.

Some of the countries who are members of WEOG were particularly supportive of Israel's participation, and I want to thank in particular the United Kingdom, as well as the northern countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland for their enlightened efforts on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to pay tribute to many of those who have worked to bring Israel into more complete participation in the United Nations.

The United States representative to the UN, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, has been an important voice for resolving this issue. He appropriately called this decision to admit Israel to WEOG "the rectification of a long-standing and wholly inexcusable exclusion of one coun-

try—and one country only—from any of the regional groups of the United Nations."

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also has personally been involved in the effort to resolve this important issue. When Israel was invited to join the WEOG the Secretary General said "this step rectifies a long-standing anomaly" which "should pave the way for Israel to participate on an equal footing with other nations in the main organs of the United Nations, and it upholds the principle, enshrined in the Charter, of equality among all member states."

Mr. Speaker, this temporary membership for Israel in WEOG is not the final step for Israel's full participation in the United Nations, and I am disappointed that the United Nations is still treating Israel differently than other nations. Although Israel will be a member of WEOG, it has been asked to forgo the opportunity to take its turn holding the most influential seats, such as the Security Council, for the foreseeable future. Also, the invitation does not include the right to participate in European caucuses at United Nations regional offices in Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi. The failure to include Israel in Geneva caucuses is significant because the UN Human Rights Commission is headquartered in Geneva, and this organization has frequently taken a hostile attitude toward Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome the decision of the WEOG to invite Israel to participate, but I emphasize that this is only a first step. Unfortunately, this first step does not fully rectify the half-century of discrimination at the United Nations to which the State of Israel has been subjected. I look forward to Israel's full participation, and I invite my colleagues to join me as we continue our efforts in this regard.

AUTHORIZING EXTENSION OF NON-
DISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT
(NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS
TREATMENT) TO PEOPLE'S RE-
PUBLIC OF CHINA

SPEECH OF

HON. TIM ROEMER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday May 24, 2000

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, today we are considering an incredibly important piece of legislation, legislation that will affect the way our Nation and our world move into the next millennium. However, I would like to outline three simple points that should show why supporting Permanent Normal Trade Relations for China is the right thing to do, both for the benefit of the United States and the people of China. Those three points are the economic benefits to American workers and business, the human rights benefits for the people of China, and the necessity to move forward into a more productive and challenging relationship with the government of China.

First, and most important to our communities and constituents, is the way in which PNTR for China will help Americans economically.

Many people become understandably confused over the complexities of trade policy. However, the necessity of PNTR can be easily

explained. China will soon be joining the WTO, and that is not a matter to be decided in Congress. However, as part of the terms of their accession to the WTO, China has been required to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement with the United States. We won those negotiations.

The agreement that was reached requires China to throw open their doors to American business and agriculture. They will reduce tariffs on American-made products from automobiles and aircraft landing systems, to soybeans and pork products. They will dramatically reduce existing quotas on American made products. They will increase the access to their domestic economy by opening up distribution and marketing channels. All of these changes mean that American businesses will be able to sell more of their products to more Chinese people. At the same time, the United States gives up nothing to the Chinese—not one single thing. There is absolutely nothing in this agreement that would encourage an American company to move to China. In fact the agreement actually gives American companies more incentive to stay in the United States. More exports to China means more jobs for Americans at better wages. Passing PNTR will change the status quo, and allow us to export American products, not American jobs.

However, if this body fails to pass this measure today, the United States will not be able to take advantage of that deal. The current status quo will remain, and American companies will find it increasingly difficult to sell their wares to a booming Chinese market. In fact, due to the fact that the European Union, and other countries in Asia and around the world have similar agreements with China, American companies will actually be worse off than they are now! The other WTO members will be able to market their products to China more efficiently than we can, effectively shutting the United States out of the China market.

The choice is simple: Economic stagnation and regression, or commercial growth and prosperity. We need to respond to the new global economy, driven by a technological revolution, with a new fair trade policy.

The choice is just as clear on the issue of human rights.

It may be easy for people in Washington, D.C. to speculate what policies might be best for the Chinese people. However, when it comes to improving the human rights and political freedoms of people in China, I tend to place more weight on what the people in China, fighting those fights every day, think is best for themselves.

The following human rights advocates strongly endorse this new policy:

Martin Lee—chairman of the Democratic Party of Hong Kong which struggles daily to maintain the freedoms that are unique to that region;

Xie Wanjun—chief director of the China Democracy Party, most of whose members are now in detention in China;

Nie Minzhi—a member of the China Democracy party who is under house arrest as we stand in this Chamber today;

Zhou Yang—a veteran of the 1979 Democracy Wall movement;

Bao Tong—a persecuted dissident and human rights activist;